

Peril & passion in Plundered Hearts

"Infocom's first romance does the genre proud. Playing Plundered Hearts was like opening a romance novel and walking inside."

—Judith C.

"The main character may be a woman, but I found Plundered Hearts every bit as challenging and exhilarating as other Infocom stories. I can't think of a better way to exercise my imagination."

—Andrew I.

"I love this! This is the most vivid and evocative Infocom game I've seen yet."

—Mrs. Thomas E.

"I was a little afraid that I wouldn't like the game at first, being male and playing it as a female, but once you got started it was NO PROBLEM! I enjoyed it!!!"

—Ron T.

These are just some of the rave reviews showered upon *Plundered Hearts*, Infocom's new release that breaks stereotypes about computer games and the people who play them. *Plundered Hearts* is a tale of adventure as gripping as any previous Infocom story, filled with challenging puzzles and scenes of derring-do. But it is also a torrid romance, the first Infocom story in which you, the main character, are a woman. In its dark and passionate world, you not only test your courage and prowess at every turn—you may fall



Boy meets girl and adventure meets romance in our latest release Plundered Hearts.

in love.

Set in the late 17th century, when ladies were delicate and gentlemen virile, when vapid kings ruled the land and lusty pirates rules the seas, *Plundered Hearts* plunges you into adventure on the high seas.

You are a beautiful young woman, the daughter of a nobleman. You receive news of your beloved father from M. Jean Lafond, who claims to be his dearest friend. Lafond is the governor of St. Sinistra, the tiny tropical isle where your father moved after the death of your mother. Lafond sends the tidings that spur you across the Atlantic: Papa is deathly ill, and needs your loving care to keep him alive. You set out aboard the *Lafond Deux*, one of the governor's ships that just happens to be in port.

Falcon, captain of the pirates.

As *Plundered Hearts* begins, just two nights from the end of the hitherto uneventful voyage, the thunder and lightning of cannon fire disturb your slumber—pirates! Within minutes you are face to face with the notorious Falcon, captain of the pirates. Under the impact of this gaze, the hard masculinity of his broad shoulders, the implied power in the scar that etches his jaw, you discover yourself blind to the dangers of this infamous pirate, aware only of the tremors that course your veins, of that flutter deep in your stomach as he draws near to you. In this most unlikely of places, you have met the man you have been waiting for all these years.

But things are not all as they seem. With the introduction of Falcon and the message he carries, you find all your expectations turned topsy-turvy. No longer can you be the staid and innocent miss from town. You

Please turn to page 8

Nord and Bert: Pick a peck of pickled puzzles

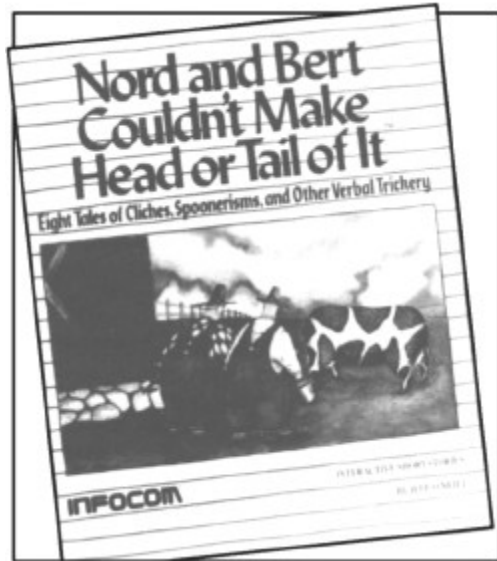
There's panic in Punster and only you can stop it.

Punster, the strangely besieged town at the center of Infocom's witty new release, needs help and it needs it fast. Because, you see, Punster is infected by a strange malady that has affected language itself. Yes, language, the thing we all depend on to carry us through our daily routine, has virtually come alive in twisted verse and forced the good people of Punster into hilarious submission.

But don't go into Punster expecting to wield an elvish sword as you might in *Zork*, or even a palm tree swizzle stick as you do in *Hollywood Hijinx*. To cure all ills here, what you'll need is a rapier sharp wit, a velvet smooth tongue, and a mind like a steel trap, not to mention just a little time and maybe even a bunch of friends.

Not one but eight stories

When you venture into *Nord and Bert Couldn't Make Head or Tail of It*, you'll find not one but eight (count 'em: eight!) stories to turn your attention to. Each of these vignettes takes you to one of Punster's most disastrously affected areas. To restore each area to relative sanity, you'll need to solve a peck of pickled puzzles. The puzzles in each story involve a different type of wordplay, including clichés, idioms, spoonerisms, homonym replacements, and other verbal witticisms. If you're familiar with *Ballyhoo*, Jeff O'Neill's first Infocom game, you know that his prose



Nord and Bert Couldn't Make Head or Tail of It, but maybe you can unravel these eight heady tales.

and puzzles can be both lever and surreal. This time around he's pulled out all the stops.

There's the mysterious forest region of "Shake A Tower," where your quest to rescue a lovely lass will

lead you into a strange land in which only the twist of a phrase can solve the puzzles that will save both her and you. To survive you'll have to be rock steady, and perhaps have your stock ready.

Or how about a trip to the wacked-out Punster TV stations where you'll have to "Play the Part" to escape the zany sit-com insanity of your brother-in-law Bob. Then there's the town eatery, The Teapot Cafe, where even the simplest actions, like trying to buy lunch, will bring you face to face with the ugly situation engulfing Punster. Waitresses no longer respond in the normal manner, even to your simplest requests. The only hope you have of getting service is by using idioms like "give the waitress the evil eye." And when your food finally comes? Well, you'll have a hard time "eating a collection of lion's meat" until you can figure out just the right thing to say to turn it into something edible.

Eating a pair of pears

Figuring out just the "right" thing to say is one of the trickier parts of *Nord and Bert*. And even if you're trying to fit a square peg in a round hole. Or eating a pair of pears, you'll be rewarded for your effort. Because as you solve each of the first seven stories, you will win the passwords that will eventually let you enter the eighth story—"Meet the Mayor." In that story you will have to bring all your wordplay exper-

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New editors take the helm of TSL

Cambridge (WZIL)—Today, Mike Dornbrook, publisher of *The Status Line*, held a press conference to announce his new selections for the editors' chairs at TSL. Mike introduced Stuart "Stella" Kirsch to the gathered throngs, saying, "Stella brings integrity and verve to the challenging position of editor-in-chief."

To guarantee continuity and technical excellence on TSL, Dornbrook followed Kirsch's announcement with the formal appointment of Hollywood Dave Anderson as the publication's chief technician and tactician. Impressing the crowd with a list of Anderson's accomplishments, Dornbrook was quoted as saying: "Hollywood brings integrity and verve to the challenging position of managing editor of this prestigious publication."

Kirsch and Anderson (Stellawood and Hollywood) took the podium from their boss to announce their multi-pronged program for TSL. Said Kirsch: "I like contests!" Anderson added: "We have been the secondary outlet for humor in this company. You can bet TSL will soon be more enjoyable than the games."

Another major point in their program would be reader response. "The results of our reader polls will be given the highest priority," proclaimed the pair. In a brief serious moment, they recognized the heavy burden of righteousness they took on with their new responsibilities. "But most of all, we're going to have fun doing it and make sure the readers do, too."

The press conference was followed by an enormous spread in honor of the new team. Dave and Stu munched on Ring Dings and Devil Dogs while schmoozing with the press, whereas Mike preferred to feast on Twinkies.

Stella? Why Stella? See page 11 for contest.

The Status Line

Mike Dornbrook, Editorial Chairman

Stuart A. Kirsch, Editor-in-Chief

Hollywood Dave Anderson, Managing Editor

Contributing Editors: Amy Briggs,
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Cynthia Weiss

Contributing Non-Editors: Gary Brennan,
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Diane Morlock, Tom Veldran

Non-Contributing Non-Editors:
Tom Bok, Russ Ceccola

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The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy is a trademark of Douglas Adams.

>Read the letters

Dear Infocom,
I'm only thirteen but I'm an avid fan of Infocom. The game I most recently got was *Leather Goddesses of Phobos*. I loved it so much I got the T-shirt for it. I wore it to school thinking my friends would think it was hilarious. They did. It was so comfortable I wore it to bed. When I woke up, it didn't smell, and it was so comfortable I wore it that day too. Everything was going fine until fifth hour swung around and my social studies teacher read the back. She got upset and called the assistant principal! Even though I wore it the day before and everybody who was going to see it did, the assistant principal made me wear it inside-out! All the kids thought the shirt was funny. Even the coach thought it was funny. There were no vulgar words on it. That's censorship at its worst! I just thought you ought to know about this.

P.S. It's so easy to get into lewd mode. I don't know why you put that in there.

P.P.S. Not that I've tried.

W. Patrick Chaney
Lake Charles, LA

Dear Infocom,
Announcement: This is a complaint! You have just come out with your third interactive fiction game which requires 128K. I have been loyal to you by buying all eight of the games that I own; and I will continue to buy more every time I can scratch up enough money. And after being so loyal, you repay me by coming out with three games that I cannot play because my computer has only 48K. That's gratitude for you! Please! Have pity! It's torture when a new game comes out and I find that I can't play it. If I had the money to buy a more powerful computer, I would. But I don't! Please, stop this torture, oh! it's so painful! I'll never be able to play these games unless I get a job. Get a job? Hmmm... Nay. Please stop this madness!

Sincerely jobless
Christopher Schiavone
Brooklyn, NY

Dear Infocom,
The following poem is for the few of us who get by with a little help from our friends or anyone else who cares to lend a helping hand. Thanks, *InvisiClues*! By the way, for the musically inclined, this goes well to the tune of "America" (My country 'tis of Thee).

Though it's not quite legit

We make good use of it

InvisiClues!

When we are in a hole

And we have searched our souls

It gets us to our goal

InvisiClues!

Sincerely,
Cindy Chang-Yit
Moorhead, MN

Dear Infocom,
Hi guys! This is a short note expressing my admiration and appreciation for you and your wonderfully frustrating games.

Zork, *Trinity*, *Cutthroats*, and *Wishbringer* have provided me with many hours of profanity, hair-pulling, and loud screams of frustration. In other words: Fun!!

Coming home after spending many hours trying to

understand the Navy's financial system, I need to relax with something not quite as challenging. Hey, there's an idea for a game—*Tom Starboard: Naval Auditor*! Nah, that may be beyond even your capabilities to bring mass confusion and utter frustration.

Keep Up The Great Work,

Jude T. Keyer

Louisville, KY

[Mass confusion? Utter frustration? Masochists of the world unite! Get in line to play Bureaucracy by Douglas Adams—ed.]

Dear Infocom,

I have a bone to pick with you guys. I have been playing your games now for about 4 years. With the aid of my friend, I played them before I even had a computer. We have been solving your games as quickly as you have been putting them out. Sometimes I had to buy the *InvisiClues* to the games, and sometimes I went and found a "walkthrough." Most of the time we didn't use hints, though.

What we loved most, though, was your concept of a "Grue." After playing adventures from Scott Adams, where all we got was "IT'S TOO DARK TO SEE!" and the original Adventure "IT'S DARK IN HERE... YOU MAY FALL INTO A PIT," your Grue was a welcome relief.

Unfortunately, we have been seeing a bad trend lately. No more Grues! *Moonmist* has you right back in the olden days, falling into pits again. Personally, I consider this a bad use of disk space.

About 3 years ago, when I started modeming, I discovered I needed an alias to get on certain BBS's. Since I loved your games so much, I chose THE ZORKIAN GRUE. I now face extinction! Is there any reason why this is happening? If not, can you please correct this grievous error?

Thank you for your time,
The Zorkian Grue
(Name and address withheld by request)

[Zorkian, wake up and smell the grue's milk!

Did you find a grue in Deadline? No, of course not. How about The Witness or Hollywood Hijinx (A Malibu grue perhaps)? No. And after some bit of traveling the universe in The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Arthur Dent didn't come across a single grue did he? Grues only exist in the Zork universe.

There is no need to fear for your extinction—by the time you read this the dreadful Ur-Grue will have slithered into an upcoming release.—ed.]

Dear Infocom,

I finally completed *Starcross*. It was better than even the hysterical *Hitchhiker*'s. I will of course buy *Suspended* or *Leather Goddesses*... I really appreciate your sci-fi work. Really tops!

Now enough nice stuff....

Love,
The Toxic Pig

CENSORED

Did you like the envelope?

Our thanks to Brian White of Houston, TX for his award-winning design in our last envelope contest.

InfoNews Roundup



"Now we know where bad boys go, straight to Infocom to answer phones."

We're looking for a few new men

When InfoReceptionist Mary Ellen O'Connor went on maternity leave, who should we find as a temp but Mark Jones, guitarist for the Boston band New Man. When we needed someone to stuff press kits, we turned to Bob Gay, the band's sax/keyboard player. Mark left after two months, but was replaced by his lead singer, Scott Gilman. We then needed someone to send out some news releases, so who else should appear but drummer Brock Avery? We are still waiting to put bassist Tim Archibald to work. Pick up their Epic album, *New Man*, and find out what InfoMusic sounds like.

Hey! Where did you get that shirt?

When the search for softball shirts was ended, the company bought over 50 of the shirts from the Merry-Go-Round in Watertown, MA. Add to that sale all the free advertising they got when everyone asked, "Hey, where'd you get that shirt?" and it is little wonder that for the month of May, they were the Store of the Month in their chain of 339 stores.

And you thought all she could do was type...

Whether you live in the Boston area or not, make plans to visit The Alley Theatre (1253 Cambridge St., Cambridge) between September 10 and October 24. Our own Tara Dolan appears in *Balm In Gilead*, a play by Lanford Wilson. Tara struts her stuff on stage, playing the proverbial hooker with a heart of gold. Don't miss it!

You want more?... You got more!

We know that you read *The Status Line* to get the latest scoop on what's going on in and around 125 CambridgePark Drive. But you can get more info on our latest titles and our role in the industry from your favorite magazines. Pick up a copy of *Games* magazine—August/September 87; *Questbusters*—July 87; *Consumer's Research*—April 87; *A+* magazine—June 87; *MACazine*—May 87; and *Time* magazine—July 27, 1987.

Crossing the international deadline

Many of our overseas readers have complained that they can't enter our contests and puzzles because their issues don't arrive before the entry closing date. Well, the Contest Subcommittee of the Board of Directors of *The Status Line* has voted to satisfy the needs of our foreign readers. Beginning with this issue, we are pleased to introduce the International Deadline—no, not Deadline, Deadline. For all readers residing outside of the United States and Canada there will be a new deadline for all contests and puzzles, except where noted. The deadline will be approximately three months after the standard (North American) deadline. The number of winners (and in some cases, the prizes) will vary according to the constraints of the individual contest and the percentage of foreign readers.

New Four-In-One Sampler now available; only \$4.95

When we decided we needed a new Sampler, we didn't mess around! Though The Four-In-One Infocom Sampler was still selling like hotcakes, something newer, more chic, and more up-to-date was needed: hence... the new Four-In-One Infocom Sampler. This fascinating little disk contains excerpts from our most popular stories—*Zork I*, *Leather Goddesses of Phobos*, and *Trinity*. And instead of a tutorial

that has you catch a butterfly, you get a tutorial from *Wishbringer*, our story that's great for newcomers. This sampler is available for Commodore 64/128, and on an Apple II/IBM MS-DOS "flippy" at the low price of \$4.95. Pick one up for yourself and for that special someone who has never experienced the thrill of our interactive fiction.

\$100 grand prize up for grabs in Infocom's T-Shirt design contest

Carl needs help! Carl Genatossio, our fabulous InfoCreative Services Manager, is so bogged down with work that he can't take on another project. He's agreed to subcontract this one out to you, our loyal fandom (rather than giving you a package design or something).

So, put all your creative juices in your blender and design the Infocom T-shirt! There are no specs for this job, just go for it. Remember, we want an Infocom T-shirt, not a game-specific one.

If your artistic skills aren't up to snuff, give us a rough sketch and a very detailed explanation so Carl's elves can figure it out and draw it. If our talent scouts choose your design as the best, you'll win the grand prize of \$100 (and

of course a T-shirt). Second prize is a game of your choice, and third is a collection of Infocom posters.

Entries must be postmarked by October 31, 1987 (international entries by January 31, 1988—a game to the best. Sorry no cash prize.). All artwork becomes the exclusive property of Infocom, Inc. and cannot be returned. Void where prohibited, taxed, licensed and in the Great Underground Empire. Employees of Infocom, their families, and their college roommates are not eligible.

Send your entry, along with your name, complete address, age, game choice, computer type and T-shirt size to: *The Status Line*, Infocom, 125 CambridgePark Drive, Cambridge, MA 02140, Attn: Genatossio-aid.

Product News

CoCo owners:

If you are fortunate enough to own a TRS-80 Color Computer—affectionately known as the Coco—have we got some good news for you! Prices on all titles available for the Coco are being slashed! Fill your library with Infocom classic titles at the outrageously low price of \$14.95. Don't delay! Order today!

Atari XL/XE owners:

We've heard a lot of complaints from Atari owners about how difficult it is to find Infocom titles for the XL/XE. You don't need to run around anymore. Infocom titles for the Atari XL/XE will now be available exclusively through our direct mail service! No more wasted time searching in stores. No more calling around to find out where to buy a game. Just call 1-800-262-6868 or mail your order to us at P.O. Box 478, Cresskill, NJ 07626.

Apricot, PDP-11, NEC APC, NEC PC-8000 owners:

This issue of *The Status Line* will be your final opportunity to purchase Infocom titles for your system. Games for these machines are being removed from stock and will not be available after November 1, 1987. Order your games while they are still available—and at the low price of \$14.95. Quantities are limited.

Crypto-VisiClues Key

Encrypted - ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
Actually - YDTUHSAQPBXVOIGMCENLZKFRW

Here begins a transcript of interaction with...

Hi! Suzy Statistician here. Paula, our previous pollster, was promoted in part for her positively proper punctuation of permutations and probabilities in her previous polls. So... yours truly has taken over the task of telling the tale of these startling stats. Here is the curious tale...

THE ROOM

The room into which Paula has led you is a large well-lit room somewhere in the bowels of the Infocomplex. Ahead is a metal desk. To the right of the desk is a small computer with a printer, both of which are on. To the left are white cloth sacks marked "U.S. MAIL." A door is open behind you. Paula is gone. The computer screen is blank, but the cursor is blinking.

>EXAMINE DESK

On the desk sits a small calculator, a box of pencils, a pencil sharpener, a legal writing tablet, and a pack of Juicy Fruit gum. In front of the desk is a folding metal chair.

>SIT

(in chair)

You are now seated behind the large desk. You feel as if the computer screen is watching you.

>OPEN MAILBAG

You struggle to lift the first mailbag. As you get the metal clasp unhooked, the bottom of the bag rips open, and with a great "whoosh," letters come pouring out.

>TAKE LETTERS

(taken)

The letters are all addressed to Paula's Poll #2.

>OPEN LETTER

The computer beeps, and the screen reads: YOUR SCORE HAS GONE UP BY ONE POINT.

>EXAMINE LETTER

As you look at the letter, you see it is actually a page cut out of *The Status Line*. It contains the name, address, age, and gender of the sender. It has a brief note from Paula about Poll #1, as well as questions and answers about TSL itself.

>EXAMINE ALL LETTERS

You begin the task of opening and reading this immense mountain of mail.

>RECORD ANSWERS

(I see no record here.)

>TAKE PENCIL. WRITE ANSWERS

ON PAD

The cursor winks and the computer beeps. YOUR SCORE HAS INCREASED BY ONE POINT. The door behind you has closed. On it appears a large comic strip poster of a man and a woman entitled "LEATHER GODDESSES OF PHOBOS." You notice the woman has an uncanny resemblance to Paula. Doing a double-take, You notice the man bears the striking good looks of Steve Meretzky, whom you met earlier.

>TURN ON CALCULATOR. ADD NUMBERS FROM LETTERS.

You flick the switch but the calculator face remains blank.

>PLUG IN CALCULATOR.

Beep. YOU HAVE SCORED A POINT.

>USE CALCULATOR TO INTERPRET ANSWERS

It quickly becomes apparent to you that TSL readers are of all ages. Readers under the age of 18 make up 34% of those responding. 29% are between 18 and 30. 26% are between 31 and 40 years old. The remaining 11% are 41 and over. You can also determine that one in five respondents is a woman.

>EXAMINE ANSWERS ABOUT GAMES AND HINTBOOKS

These answers reveal that the average respondent owns over 7 games and 2 *InvisClues* hint booklets. They own every kind of computer from Apple to Zenith. 25% own Apple machines; 20% own Commodores; 18% own IBM systems; Ataris make up 14%; the others own all kinds of machines. The computer, perhaps intrigued by information about computers, makes loud noises, attracting your attention. You turn to it and, like a mood ring, the screen has turned from lime green to

bright purple.

>INTERPRET INFO ON PUZZLE QUESTIONS

You find that 71% of those responding to the poll have tried to solve a TSL puzzle, but only 15% have ever sent in their solutions. Most (39%) think the puzzles are a little on the hard side and most (42%) think that the puzzles should require general knowledge, as opposed to in-depth knowledge of the games, to solve them.

As for reader preference of puzzles, most want visual games, just slightly ahead of word puzzles and trivia puzzles. Math puzzles finished a distant fourth.

>TALLY AND INTERPRET ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS REGARDING READER PREFERENCES ON SUBJECTS THAT TYPICALLY APPEAR IN A STATUS LINE ISSUE

(That sentence is not one that I recognize.)

>CHECK LOVE IT-HATE IT ANSWERS

You readjust yourself in the chair and sit perched on the edge of your seat, for this section of the poll is the most fascinating; in it you find out what readers like most and least about TSL. You discover that articles on new products are by far the most popular—80% of readers give them a score of 1 (love it). Next popular are humor (66%) and stories about the creation of games (57%). Game hints and cartoons also are scored 1 by more than 50%.

Cornerstone articles are the least popular, but that doesn't surprise you, since you look back and see that only 4% of those answering the poll own Cornerstone. Hopefully, you muse, the rest of the respondents aren't using a less efficient and more expensive database. YOUR SCORE HAS GONE UP

BY 2 POINTS, beeps the red computer.

>ANARIZE SUMMARYSIS

Eh?

>SUMMARIZE ANALYSIS

Though your eyes are burning, bleary and bloodshot from the strain of staring at surveys and statistics, you feel proud of your accomplishments. The printer begins churning out all the information at lightning speed.

>TAKE REPORT

As you rip the computer sheet from the printer, in walks Stella, editor of TSL, along with Mike Dornbrook, director of marketing. Paula, her polling days now behind her, turns, closes the door and walks back down the long hallway.

>TELL THEM ABOUT RESULTS. GIVE STELLA REPORT.

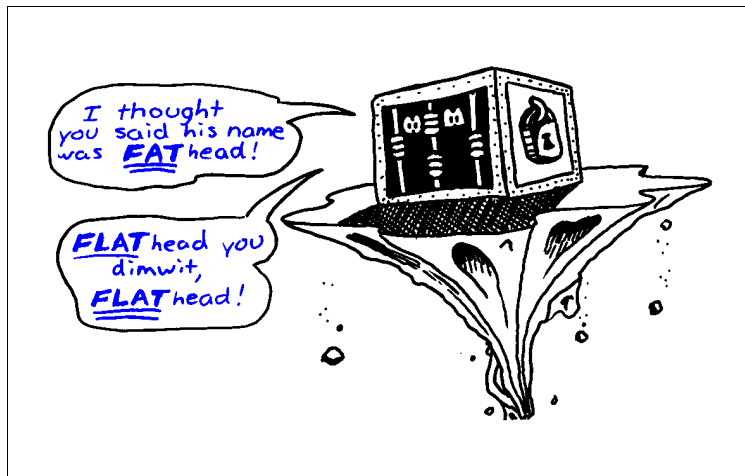
As you explain what the readers want, Stella and Mike listen with beaming faces. You hear the churning wheels in Stella's mind. When you finish, Stella begins to speak. "Mike, Suzy... We now know what they want. I say let's give it to them. They like contests. We'll put tons of them in the next issue.

"They want to find out about new products. We'll tell them in graphic detail, and let them know what will be happening in the future. Our readers also want reviews of old games, so let's write about them and give larger reviews. They want hints, we'll let 'em have *VisiClues*, that they still have to interpret so games don't get ruined for everyone..."

You drift off into your own little world as Stella talks on and on about changes in TSL—you figure you'll just wait for it to come out. The computer winks at you and beeps. YOUR SCORE HAS DOUBLED. YOU HAVE GIVEN THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT. YOU HAVE ATTAINED THE RANK OF INTERPLANETARY EMPRESS. WHAT ARE YOU DOING FOR DINNER, YOUR HIGHNESS?

Stella continues: "We can show our readers that their input really has impact. If they want reviews of old game, why, we can make it a regular feature. And if our readers from outside the country want to be able to enter contests, we'll have a special deadline for them..."

The figures on the poster behind you have come to life. The Steve-like man kisses your hand, and the Paula-like woman bows before you. So, this is Infocom. This could be fun.



Dan Schmiedeler

>Tell me about Customer Support

Question: How can I get Infocom disks in the 3 1/2" format for my IBM?

Answer: Presently, we do not produce our IBM products (either interactive fiction games or *Cornerstone*) in the 3 1/2" format. However we do produce a non-copy-protected 5 1/4" disk (IBM PC-DOS and MS-DOS 2.0 or above) which our customers can download themselves to a 3 1/2" disk.

Copy-protected IBM disks can be exchanged for non-copy-protected disks for a \$5 fee.

Question: A line of strange characters—arrows, brackets, and numbers—appears on my status line when using the IBM PC-DOS/MS-DOS 2.0 diskette. Why?

Answer: These are ASCII characters which appear if the DOS file, ANSI.SYS hasn't been loaded. Go through the INSTALL program again. To load ANSI.SYS, be sure to reboot the system (by pressing CTL, ALT and DEL simultaneously) after the installation is complete. If rebooting has no effect, be sure that the DOS file ANSI.SYS resides on your disk (the root directory of hard disks). Also be sure that the CONFIG.SYS file has the line which reads: DEVICE = ANSI.SYS. You may need to create a CONFIG.SYS file using the DOS EDLIN or COPY CON command to include a line: DEVICE = ANSI.SYS. (TI PRO and DEC users do not have the ANSI file on their DOS directories.)

Question: Should I expect any problems with my Infocom products while using DOS 3.2?

Answer: Since DOS 3.2 has just arrived on the scene, we have not fully tested all our products with this latest version of DOS. If you should encounter any unusual problems, please write them down along with your exact hardware specifications, and forward it to us at the address below.

Question: I've noticed that recent games have no difficulty ratings on them. Without a rating, how can I know if a game is right for me?

Answer: When we had ratings on our games, there was always quite a bit of controversy, some customers saying that standard-level games were difficult, and some saying that advanced-level games were easy. It became apparent that people with great knowledge in one field or another would find a certain kind of story or puzzle to be easier to solve, whereas others would find even simpler puzzles to be very difficult. We mention on the back of our packages that a game would be "good as an introduction" or something to that effect, but we found we're not in the best position to rate the difficulty of our own games. Another idea is to read various reviews of Infocom products; reviewers are generally able to give honest opinions of a story's difficulty.

Question: With *Cornerstone* I have a derived attribute defined as the sum of other attributes in my file, but sometimes there's a blank result. What's wrong.

Answer: As a safeguard, a derived attribute will be left blank if any of its variables is blank. For example, you may have a derived attribute defined as: `Derived_attr=Attrib_1+Attrib_2+Attrib_3`

Derived_attr will only be computed if there is a value in Attrib_1 and Attrib_2 and Attrib_3; if any one of these attributes is blank, then Derived_attr will be blank.

If you don't want this to occur, a possible way to prevent it is to define an initial value for all attributes that will be used in the derivation expression. This initial value could be a zero if it's being used in addition derivations, or a one if it's being used in multiplication derivations.

Questions? Call (617) 576-3190 between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. Eastern time. Or write to: Customer Support, Infocom, 125 CambridgePark Drive, Cambridge, MA 02140



Infolmps Steve Meretzky (pulling someone's leg) and Dave Lebling (the guy with the tie) ham it up with the members of The Second City comedy troupe at last May's Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago.

The comedy stylings of The Second City

It's known as the Windy City. It was a place of business for Al Capone. Richard Daly called it his city for decades. It has the busiest airport in the world. A group of young comedians gathered there called it *The Second City*. It became the breeding ground for comic greats such as John Belushi, Elaine May, Dan Aykroyd and Joan Rivers. At the Consumer Electronics Show in May, Infocom made Chicago their second city.

At trade shows, everyone has their booths and their suites and their presentations and even their cocktail hours and their parties. But, as you well know, Infocom is always different. And with the help of *The Second City* comedy troupe and Infocom's new titles—*Stationfall* and *The Lurking Horror*—it would be a memorable convention for every salesman with dip on his lapel and every exhibitor who stumbled around McCormick Place the morning after the night before.

For the third year running, droves of InfoGuests joined tyrannosauruses, brontosauruses and mummies at the magnificent Field Museum of Natural History. They came by the hundreds to see what the puzzle masters had prepared for them.

From newspapers and magazines, from manufacturers and distributors, from Europe and Japan they came to consume food and spirit. To the sound of the Susie Hansen band they shared news of bits, bytes and nibbles. They came because they knew their funny bones would be tickled. Infocom would satiate their need for something new and different. Needless to say, they were not disappointed by InfoProvisation.

"InfoProvisation" they asked? Info-

Provisation they saw! Resident members of *The Second City* combined the ideas and ideals of Infocom with their own brand of comedy.

Through a hilarious sequence of skits using very few props (a couple of chairs and a piano) the audience saw a computerized dating simulator, roared at a romance between next-generation computers and a piece of has-been software, met *Stationfall*'s Floyd, visited GUE Tech and even had the opportunity to affect the course of a scene or two.

In a tribute to the best-selling *Leather Goddesses of Phobos*, three vignettes, set in a singles bar and interspersed throughout the program, showed real-life versions of the three playing modes. Tame would have made Mother Teresa proud, but by the time they went from suggestive to lewd, it was enough to make Donna Rice blush.

Cynthia Weiss, InfoPublic Relations Manager, who ran the event, was excited about the prospect of using the great comedic minds of *The Second City* to illustrate the inimitable style of Infocom and its innovative products. Thanks go to the diligent efforts of event consultant and former InfoTrade Show Coordinator Renata Daroszewska, who came up with the idea of using *The Second City* in the first place.

Stories of InfoProvisation were covered by AP and ran in newspapers from Alexandria, VA, to Jefferson City, MO, to Racine, WI. Folks in the audience brought back stories about "Point Woman!" and new ways of lighting cigarettes to sales floors and board rooms the world over.

Old soldiers never die, and neither do Infocom interactive stories. But, because software retailers can stock only current titles, some great older games are forgotten in marketing and distribution strategies. Nonetheless, we still stock all of our titles at our mail center in New Jersey. Knowing how people never seem to get enough Infocom, we want to make sure that everyone can get these classic titles as well as the new ones.

Many people have told us, in Paula's Poll (see pg 4), in letters, and in phone calls, that they are interested in these older titles and would like reviews of our classic stories. All of our classics are available at special low prices only through *The Status Line*; and so you can know more about them than the blurb you see in a catalog, we will be reviewing three of our vintage stories in this and future issues of *TSL*.

Deadline, *Infidel*, and *Starcross* were not only the first mystery, adventure, and science fiction stories, respectively, we developed; they are also among the most popular games in each genre. Each game was both critically and popularly acclaimed when it was released.



Infidel, from our Tales of Adventure series, is a desperate search for the lost, great pyramid in the Egyptian desert.

Players were particularly by the sense of danger the game projects; critics applauded the consummate treatment of this classic genre.

Set in the vast desert of Egypt, somewhere near the banks of the River Nile, *Infidel* challenges you to find the buried entrance to the last great pyramid, and, once inside, seize priceless treasures that have remained hidden for thousands of years.

As the ruthless, determined explorer, you make your men work on a religious holiday. They revolt and desert you, leaving you without tools and supplies. Now you are marooned in the desert, but still ready to continue your quest.

You must find food and water, lest buzzards feast upon your bones. And should you survive the desert and the scorching sun, you must still find the pyramid. But adventure just begins as you find it. When you enter the cavernous pyramid, buried deep beneath the sands, you must unravel the shrouded mysteries that lie entombed within, and find its hidden treasures.

The outside package of *Infidel* has the rugged look of a canvas portfolio containing your personal effects, a tattered attache that has survived adventure and danger the world over. Inside, you find a host of ingenious game pieces that bring the searing vast desert adventure right into your living

Three classics reviewed

Adventure in the desert, space and Connecticut: A second look at *Infidel*, *Starcross* and *Deadline*

room and provide valuable clues to help you solve the challenges and puzzles you face. As you read your Expedition Log, the hand-written diary of your search for the great pyramid, and your personal correspondence, written on stationary with an authentic Egyptian stamp, you'll feel the temperature rise and your throat wither from thirst. Also a parchment-like map of the Nile River Valley, complete with latitude and longitude coordinates; and a rubbing of hieroglyphics with a partial dictionary will help you move about the desert plain that reaches onward without end.

Written by Mike Berlyn, who also wrote *Suspended* and *Cuthroats*, this tale of adventure was highly regarded by reviewers who applauded its sense of realism and desperation.

Games magazine called *Infidel* "a well-nigh perfect re-creation of this scenario: the cursed-treasure-in-the-lost-pyramid tale." *The Salt Lake City Tribune* called *Infidel* "a vivid, living game that redefines 'interactive.' Whether you solve it or not *Infidel* is absorbing and fun."



Starcross, a science fiction adventure, rockets you out of the desert into a future universe. Jettisoned into the depths of space, you meet a variety of interstellar beings—some friendly, and others who are ready to vaporize you.

As the story unfolds you awake to the ring of your mass detector's constant call. You've apparently just discovered a large, uncharted black hole that unbelievably offers you a life of luxury. But something more lurks in this endless hole of darkness.

You'll soon find that the "black hole" is an enormous alien spaceship spinning so rapidly that it produces an

artificial gravity. Aboard the M.C.S. *Starcross*, a one-person vessel outfitted for the discovery and mining of black holes, you are about to become the first human to meet intelligent extraterrestrial lifeforms. While looking for that really BIG strike, you discover that someone—or something—has found you.

You must use every ounce of cunning and courage you can muster to unravel the mystery of the great ship that has beckoned you into its own interior. First you must gain entry to the gargantuan ship. Upon entering, you find not a strange alien creature, but an assembly of creatures from across the galaxy. Is it just a vast intercultural relations improvement seminar? Or could it be something much more ominous? In *Starcross*, you will answer the challenge that was issued eons ago, from light years away.

By using the provided ship's log of the *Starcross*, the computer-generated map of outer space, the most up-to-date instructions on what to do when you encounter aliens, and your best game-solving skills, you may be able to solve the problems posed by the builders of this incredible artifact, gain control of it, and return to Earth with a priceless cargo.

This interplanetary adventure, written in 1982 by Dave Lebling, his first story after writing *Zork*, was praised by *PC World*, which said, "All the ingredients of a good Robert A. Heinlein sci-fi novel are here: the wildcat prospector (that's you), the sassy ship computer, and a lucky find that could be too hot to handle... it is a great game in which to lose yourself..." *Sofiline* magazine added: "Starcross requires you to be a scientist, an engineer, an astronaut, an explorer, and a diplomat. It expects you to have the judgement to know when to shoot a gun and the wisdom to know

when not to... It is a sheer pleasure to play."



One of our earliest and most popular games was the unparalleled whodunnit *Deadline*. *Deadline* was awarded an "Arkie" by *Electronic Games* magazine in 1983 as the Best Computer Adventure. In 1985 it joined a very select group of software when it was certified gold (100,000 copies sold) by the Software Publishers Association. *Deadline* was the first computer mystery from any software publisher.

Released in 1982, *Deadline* finds you, a police detective, pitted against the clock to solve a mysterious murder. Everything indicates that the wealthy industrialist has killed himself, but you smell foul play. The scene is the classic locked-door mystery, and you are the Chief of Detectives. You know that you can't make any mistakes, because the next corpse in the coroner's office might have your name tagged on its toe.

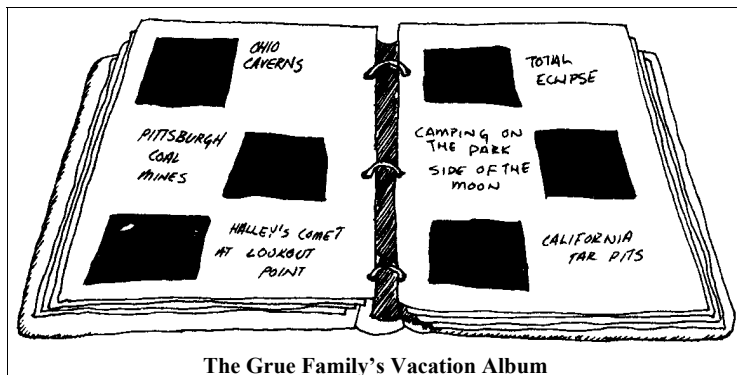
You'll sift through the evidence you've been provided with: the police file on the death of Marshall Robner, a letter from the attorney of the deceased, the coroner's findings, a picture of the scene of the crime, and even the pills found near the body. You've got a 12-hour time limit to solve the case, in which you must interrogate suspects and track down the killer. But if you arrest someone, you've got to have proof of the three traditional elements of an ironclad case: a motive, a method and an opportunity to commit the crime.

Deadline puts you at the scene of the crime as you examine suspects for motives and alibis. You've based your suspicion on a hunch, but only clues will give you the hard facts.

There are over a dozen possible endings to the story but you determine the conclusion. Only one ending best fits the facts and you'll know who is guilty beyond a shadow of a doubt if your sleuthing is up to snuff.

The New York Times called *Deadline* "an amazing feat of programming," while *Softalk* magazine complemented, "If the Mystery Writers of America gave an award for Best Fiction in Software, *Deadline* would win in a walk..."

Infidel, *Starcross* and *Deadline* are available for a wide assortment of personal computers. Consult the price list in the center of this newsletter to find a complete listing. Please note that on some systems, quantities are limited. These titles—*Infidel*, *Starcross* and *Deadline*—are offered at the special price of \$14.95 exclusively through Infocom.



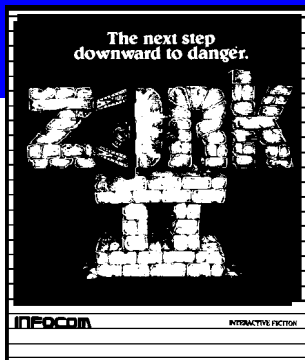
The Grue Family's Vacation Album

Jonathan Higgins

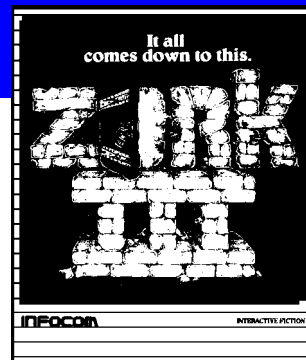
SPECIAL OFFERS

Many of you who own only part of the Zork Trilogy expressed interest in a special offer to complete it. Here it is!

Zork II
\$19.95



Zork III
\$19.95



Or buy both
Zork II & Zork III
for only

\$29.95!



Get a **free** Zorkmid coin
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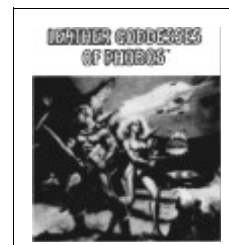
for Amiga, Apple,
Atari ST, IBM
and Macintosh

3 InvisiClues \$10!

Infidel
Wishbringer
Zork III
Deadline
Starcross
Suspended
Planetfall
Seastalker
Cutthroats
Suspect

**A Mind Forever Voyaging
Spellbreaker
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Include a copy of this coupon with your order.
Offer expires 12/31/87



Free

**Leather Goddesses
of Phobos**
poster with any Leather
Goddesses order!

Include a copy of this
coupon with your order.
Offer expires 12/31/87.

By Steve Meretzky

May 1 was a red letter day for me. I turned thirty, finished writing *Stationfall*, and began the vacation that my wife and I had been planning for months and dreaming of for years: a multi-week cross-country drive. Boston to San Francisco. Eleven National Parks. The awesome beauty of the American West.

Betty, my wife, was able to get away from work for only two weeks, so I left a week earlier. She would be flying to Rapid City, SD, to meet me. In Pittsburgh, I picked up Jerry Wolper, former Infocommie and co-author of *Cutthroats*, who would be accompanying me through Minneapolis.

As we departed the Smoky City, the vast farmlands of Ohio beckoning, we decided to take a mild detour in order to visit that small town where *Leather Goddesses of Phobos* begins: Upper Sandusky, Ohio.

Although I had chosen Upper Sandusky as the starting point for *Leather Goddesses*, I'd never been there and knew virtually nothing about it. After I finished writing *Leather Goddesses*, I wondered if I would get letters from Infocom fans in Upper Sandusky, delighted to see their town immortalized in the annals of interactive fiction. After six months, no such letters had appeared.

We approached Upper Sandusky from the south. About five miles outside of town, in the middle of the flat Ohio farmland, a large billboard assaulted our view. "Upper Sandusky," it read, "The place to be!" Below, the billboard listed the features of the town, adding, "No, it's not on Lake Erie!" This last line was presumably a reference to the larger and more well-known city, Sandusky. (Sandusky lies on Lake Erie, at the mouth of the Sandusky River. Upper Sandusky is in central Ohio, fifty or a hundred miles upriver.)

Upper Sandusky, occupying a few square blocks around the intersection of routes 199 and 30, is a sleepy little town, reminiscent of Andy Griffith's Mayberry. We had two goals for the visit: seeing if

Upper Sandusky: No, it's not on Lake Erie and there isn't a Joe's

there was a Joe's Bar in town (since that's where the opening scene of *Leather Goddesses* takes place), and finding a computer store.

While buying postcards at the old-fashioned drug-store/newsstand in the center of town, we borrowed a telephone directory (about the size of an *InvisiClues* booklet). First the bad news: of the four taverns in Upper Sandusky, none were named Joe's Bar. The good news: There WAS a computer store, on the outskirts of town — a block away, that is.

It was now a few minutes past 5pm, and Computers Plus of Ohio had a sign on the door saying CLOSED. The door was unlocked, however, so (being good adventurers) we entered. It was a tiny place, with several computers, a magazine rack, and a small pegboard of software. Most of it was business software;



there were only two entertainment products, and everything seemed sort of, well, sort of faded. A young woman appeared from the back room.

YW: I'm sorry, we're closed. I'm only here because I'm still backing up the computers.

SM: I'm not really a customer. We're from Infocom, and we were driving through town, and I was wondering what the Upper Sandusky computer store was like.

YW: Info... what?

SM: Infocom. I wrote a game that was set in Upper Sandusky...

YW: (trying to look interested) Oh, really...?

SM: Infocom. It's own by Activision...

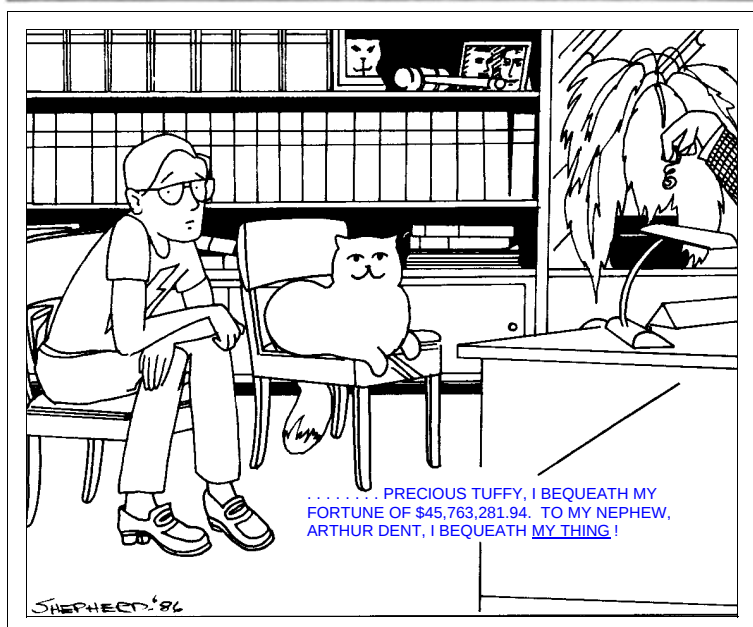
YW: Acti... what?

SM: Well, we'll be going now...

So, that was Upper Sandusky. No brass bands, no key from the Mayor, no banners proclaiming "Welcome, Author of *Leather Goddesses*." Why does reality have to intrude on life so often?

[**Editor's epilogue:** Steve Meretzky wasn't the only one interested in Upper Sandusky, and don't expect this to be the last you've heard of Upper Sandusky. The story continues on a steamy afternoon when Mike Dornbrook was being interviewed for an article in *The Wall Street Journal* (6/11/87 pg. 27). Reporter Dave Sullivan, of the *WSJ* Pittsburgh office saw the article, and, like Steve, wanted to find out Upper Sandusky's response to *Leather Goddesses*. After doing heavy research into his story, he found, as did Steve, that Upper Sandusky had no response to *Leather Goddesses*.

Mayor Don Hall of Upper Sandusky found out about Infocom's hit game at this point, and was perplexed by the apathy. He contacted Debbie Baumann, of the *Upper Sandusky Daily Chief-Union*, and asked her to find out more about Infocom, Steve and *Leather Goddesses*, and to write a story on it. Keep your eyes peeled.]



..... PRECIOUS TUFFY, I BEQUEATH MY
FORTUNE OF \$45,763,281.94. TO MY NEPHEW,
ARTHUR DENT, I BEQUEATH MY THING!

Samuel M. Shepherd

Plundered Hearts

Continued from page 1

must don the attitude with the attire of a pirate, learn to fight with sword and pistol, and adopt the devilousness of the most deceptive buccaneer. Your adventure has only just begun!

Included in the *Plundered Hearts* package are the letter from Jean Lafond that tells of your father's illness, and a 50-guinea note from the Bank of St. Sinistra. These are both securely kept in the velvet reticule that every lady carries tied to her wrist.

Plundered Hearts is the first work of interactive fiction by Amy Briggs. To research this historical adventure, Amy spent many of her formative years reading trashy romances, studied vast tomes of costume design through the ages, and ran away from home to join a pirate band.

For more adventure on the high seas,

each *Plundered Hearts* package contains a coupon which you can mail in to get *Cutthroats* for \$14.95. This is a special price only available through this offer. In *Cutthroats*, you're a local diver who becomes entangled with shady island characters in search for a lost shipwreck containing sunken treasures. *Cutthroats* contains several shipwrecks which provides for multiple adventures.

Set for release in early September, *Plundered Hearts* will be available for a wide variety of personal computers, including Apple II series and Macintosh, Atari XL/XE and ST series, Commodore 64/128 and Amiga, and IBM PC series and MS-DOS compatibles. The suggested retail price is \$34.95 for Atari XL/XE (mail order only) and Commodore 64/128 and \$39.95 for all other systems.

Hawaiian shirts & boys of summer

It was a cold day in late April. The rain was taking a short break, long enough for twenty or so rag-tag Infocom softball hopefuls to show their wares and showcase their talent in front of InfoManager "General" Lorri Fischer and the rest of the cigar-smoking front office. What began that day will no doubt soon be enshrined in the Softball Hall of Fame in Upper Sandusky, Ohio.

It took the General but a few short weeks to turn this bunch of lowlifes, sleazebuckets, and marketers into what InfoScorekeeper Steve "Error?... Nah, let's call it a hit" Meretzky called "the finest, most talented softball machine I've ever seen assembled." Added InfoSuperstar John Arnold, "We can beat the Padres, no sweat!"

When asked what made this team so special, InfoSecondbaseman and Vice President Chris Reeve replied "We've got it all. We've got power. We've got speed. We've got great fielding. We've got style and finesse on the ball field. But what makes this team better than any other is the fact that we've got THE shirts."

"Hawaiian shirts on drugs"

What shirts, you ask? Well, InfoShortstop Jeff O'Neill describes them as "Hawaiian shirts on drugs." (He was, of course, driving his yellow Rabbit in left field when we caught up with him for the quote.) InfoRightfielder and tester Max Buxton called them "the best thing since microwaveable frozen Mexican dinners." InfoShortstop and summer PR intern John D'Acerno said that they reminded him of the Summer of Love... Venice Beach... acid... too much rum...

As the shirts debuted on the playing field, busload after busload of smarmy little kids screamed out, "Nice Shirts!" A fad was to be born. (You, too, can own one of these soon-to-be collector's items. See details in your grocer's freezer.)

Meanwhile, back on the field, Infocom's superstars, near-stars, and starlets were shining on and off the field—InfoCenterfielder Dave Lebling suggested that they were all glowing bright blue. Who can forget those catches by InfoOutfielders Hollywood Dave Anderson and Tom Bok up against the warning tree in center field? And how about the catches that InfoRightfielder and Financial Administrator Diane Morlock almost made in the warning gully in right field? Luckily it wasn't raining or she might never have found her way back onto the field. And let's not



Here is some of the team returning from the team picture which didn't turn out so we used this one.

Your Grocer's Freezer

You, too, can be part of the greatest season that ever lived. Guess our final record correctly and you will win a SHIRT of your very own. Yes, the shirt that InfoPitcher and Tester Gary Brennan calls "my favorite shirt except for the NZT Puzzle Winner T-shirt" can be yours if you have the foresight to predict the season record of this unequaled bunch of softball aficionados.

To help you on the way to fame, fortune, and a SHIRT, we will tell you that the season had six games. Post-season play featured a wild-card playoff between the fourth and fifth teams, semi-finals, and the championship game. Send your prediction, along with your name and address to The Wave, Infocom, 125 CambridgePark Drive, Cambridge, MA 02140 by October 1, 1987. (No international deadline.) If more than one correct answer is received, a lottery will be held among all correct entries.

forget those tremendous blows by InfoSluggers Micro Hacker John Arnold and Tester Matt Hillman. Perhaps the crowning achievement of the season was the cook-out at the home of InfoSluggers and Director of Marketing Mike Dornbrook.

A well-conditioned beer-belly

As the season began, the team was to face some tough competition, not the least of which was a week-long carnival on its practice field. But this team was ready. General Fischer had arranged for this team to scrimmage against Cambridge's most feared softball team—the 1369 Jazz Club. Week after week, Infocom dug in its spikes against these beer-swilling, cigarette-smoking bar patrons, owners, and tenders. And week after week, Cambridge's finest nightclub team put on the most impressive of exhibitions of softball expertise before pulling defeat from the jaws of victory. Yes, it was true. The high-techsters proved that a well-conditioned mind could defeat a well-conditioned beer-belly in a game of skill. They were ready to take on the league.

Needless to say, the sun started shining on the crew from CambridgePark Drive. InfoLeftfielder and Activation Eastern Region Sales Manager Jack Tretton threw out a Miller Communications player at home on a strike from left field via relay man O'Neill (he wasn't in his car). InfoPitcher and Marketing Stuart Kirsch had two assists and a putout in one inning against Gold Hill Computers, making the last out from a position familiar only to contortionists. InfoInfielder and Micro Hacker Duncan Blanchard made some sparkling grabs at second base against Venturecom. InfoPinchhitter and Activation Sales Administrative Assistant Tara Dolan had two RBIs in her first plate appearances of the season.

The bearded guy in the stands

The one thing that seemed to bother the team throughout the season was the bearded guy in the stands who had a big yellow sign that read "John 3:16."

Well, by the time you're reading this, the season is over, the team's mitts are again collecting mold in the store room, the great plays are relived in moments of drunken excitement, the errors are dim memories that someone else committed. But for those who took part, it was special. Knowing full well that "It Happens Every Spring" InfoPlayers can't wait for the IWL (Indoor Wiffleball League) to start.

During cold snowy days Infocom employees were doing more than shoveling snow or sled riding.

Sometime in January, while the final touches were being added to *Lurking Horror*, a strange thing occurred. One starless snowbound night two people sat sipping cocktails around a fire. The talk turned to tales of terror and the two moved close together. Perhaps it was one to many hot toddies or too many ghost stories that led to the heated evening between our own creative art genius Carl Genatossio and his wife, Nina, which resulted in the conception of Carl's best package to date. But we will have to wait 'til October to see this masterpiece.

Meanwhile, Imp Steve Meretzky put his snow-bound hours to good use trying out new x-rated puzzles with his wife Betty. The long winter left her with a fetish for taking early pregnancy tests.

Dear Diary . . .

According to Steve "they turned her on." According to their doctor the long months of experimentation produced results that will yield a little one sometime in January. Perhaps Steve will need some help in picking a name for his Pebbles or Bam Bam. Should we have a baby name contest?

Before babies, before Christmas, before The Road Trip, Micro King Tom Veldran was a single man. A few days before the Christmas party Hollywood hijacked TV to New Hampshire on a booze run. Well, driving was hectic, cold and a bottle of Bailey's long. Hollywood dropped TV off at home where he was greeted by his girlfriend Lisa. Two hours later on bended knee he lost his bachelorhood, forever. On

July twelfth, Tom officially entered Infocom's Baby Race.

Recently our VP of R & D, Chris Reeve and his lady Nancye stole off to the MIT Chapel to exchange vows. Though they had planned this union in secret, they didn't get away without an InfoToast and a bottle of champagne for the honeymoon.

The hands-down winner of this year's reproduction award, and not because she knows how to fix the copiers, is our receptionist Mary Ellen O'Connor, who gave birth to her second Infobaby, Jacqueline in June.

Who's next to enter the realm of rapture? Could it be Amy Briggs, author of our new romance *Plundered Hearts*?

Need advice about love or romance in the world of computers? Write me, Dear Diary, c/o *The Status Line*.

More about Nord and Bert and Punster

Continued from page 1

tise to bear in order to restore Punster to tranquility. And when you do, you'll sample the sweet taste of victory.

The short-story structure of *Nord and Bert* offers a unique new method of playing an Infocom game. Since the individual stories are in essence separate worlds—each with their own locations, characters, and objects—a story may be played and completed in one sitting, and the satisfaction level is equal to that attained from playing other Infocom games, which can take many days or weeks. *Nord and Bert* is the game for you if you're that busy tinker, tailor, soldier or spy who doesn't have tones of time to tend to our tantalizing textual titles. Or if you're the party animal, *Nord and Bert* is the perfect pastime to play with your pals, since some clichés are notoriously elu-

sive when you're alone, and you can show off your worldly knowledge and marvel at your friends' command of the hackneyed phrase. No doubt everyone will want to take a stab at it and put in their two cents' worth.

Nord and Bert also introduces some other new features that are bound to be crowd pleasers. The short stories are as easy to play for the novice as the Infocom pro. Mapping is a thing of the past since all accessible locations are displayed at the top of the screen. Just type in the name of the location you want to go to and you're there.

When it comes to hints, *Nord and Bert* brings you some good news and some bad news. The bad news is that Infocom will never publish an *InvisiClues* hint booklet for *Nord and Bert*. The good news is that you'll never need one, because the hints are all on

the disk! Just type HINT, and you'll be able to see hints for any puzzle that has you stumped. But the hints won't spoil anything for you, for you only see what you want to see when you want to see it. No fair peeking now!

As usual, we strive to go that extra mile for our customers by enhancing our software with unique and interesting packaging elements. This time around you will get a beautiful full-color booklet of original cartoons by Kevin Pope, author of *The Day Gravity Was Turned Off in Topeka*. So, get together with your friends, laugh over Kevin's cartoons and then try to save Punster. Language may be twisted in Punster, but words needn't fail you.

But don't think that the fun stops here. In every package of *Nord and Bert*, there's a special offer that lets you double your pleasure and double over

in laughter. It's a coupon you can send in with \$14.95 to receive *Ballyhoo*, Jeff O'Neill's first interactive mystery set under the circus bigtop. This is a savings of up to \$25.

In *Ballyhoo* you'll be tempted by cotton candy and tattooed ladies, but you must find out who kidnapped the owner's daughter before someone makes a permanent space for you in the freak show.

Ready to bring you to your knees in early September, *Nord and Bert* will be available for a wide range of personal computers, including Apple II series, Macintosh (512K) and Atari ST series. Also Commodore 64 and 128 and Amiga, and IBM PC series and 100% compatibles. Suggested retail price is \$34.95 for Commodore 64/128 and \$39.95 for all other computer systems.

Introducing VisiClues: Some hints for recent games

We know that all you InfoFans out there have rushed out and bought all of our recent games—*Hollywood Hijinx* and *Bureaucracy*—and we know how much you hate to buy our newer releases—*Stationfall* and *The Lurking Horror*—before you've finished the old ones. Therefore, starting with this issue of *The Status Line*, we are offering VisiClues to help you through the hardest puzzles in the not-so-latest releases.

Here's how it works: included are two questions from the hardest puzzles of *Hollywood Hijinx* and *Bureaucracy*—but the answers have been encrypted (Ollie North would have been proud). It's a simple substitution cipher with the encryption key on page 3. You can either: use the key to decrypt the VisiClues you need; crack the encryption

key to solve the clues you need; or crack the key for the fun of it.

Bureaucracy

How can I deposit a negative check?

- A. Bsinfocotp g tspgcoms resrw of uows zocebygzotp infocoms qntsa. And qdrc nmmsy ces jgugtrs xynq andy grndtc.
- B. Bsinfocotp infocoms qntsa of ces fgqs gf g tspgcoms zocebygzgu.
- C. Czn zyntpf qgws g yopec gtb czn tspgcomsf qgws g infocoms.
- D. Cyz zocebygzotp ces tspgcoms resrw.
- E. Ces zocebygzgu csuusy rgt's egtbus resrwf. Rntbdr c ces cygtfgrcont gc ces bsinfoc zotbnz.
- F. Cn bsinfoc ces tspgcoms resrw (xny g infocoms qndtc cn andy grndtc) xouu ndc ces zocebygzgu fuoi gtb

egtb oc cn ces bsinfoc csuusy guntp zoce ces tspgcoms resrw.

How do I navigate the switchgear maze?

- A. Idc ces dtugjsusb rgycyobps ces vgugpgfgtf pgms and ot ces mqjdcy.
- B. Cais ioyotcj, iyotcr, iyotcb gtb iyotcs ot ces iynisy nybsy cn psc g qsfpgs.
- C. Usccsyf j ceyndpe s nrddy sufszyesys.
- D. Ces qgou egb infcgu fcorwsyf j ceyndpe s.
- E. Bn ces iyotcf ot ces nybsy and iorwsb di ces qgou fcorwsyf (inidugy igygtmog, xuasy, rndint jnnwusc, stmsunis).
- F. Ysgb ces qsfpgs msycorguua cn dtbsyfcgfb oc.

qstcontf ceysy boysrcontf zoceot ces qnmos cocusf.

G. Cdyt ces fcgdc ot cesfs boysrcontf cn dtunrw ces xyntc bnny.

I know there's a room above the second floor. How do I get there?

- A. Dfs ces runfsc/susmgcny cn psc cesys.
- B. Smsy jst ni cni nx ces runfsc jatscyotp ces runfsc bnny nts xunny gjnms ces susmgcny?
- C. Ox ces runfsc qnmsb cn ces fsrntb xunny zeous and zsys nt cni, and'b js gc ces gcor!
- D. And rgt'c grcomgs ces susmgcny rntcynuf xyng ces cni nx ces runfsc.
- E. Iduu g runfsc isp gtb ysgb ces bsfryoicnt msya runfsua.
- F. Ces runfsc bnsft'c qnms dtcou ces isp of ysusgfsb. Zest ces isp ftgfg jgrw di, ces susmgcny of grcomgsb.
- G. And tssb g coqotp bsmors cn enub bnzt ces ceoyb isp dtcou and rgt psc nt cni nx ces runfsc.
- H. Rgysxduua slgqots ces jdrwsc.
- I. Oc'f ydfcotp ceyndpe, cesysxny oc'f usgwa.
- J. Xouu ces jdrwsc zoce zgcsy gc pgybst, tnyce. Hdorwua yscdyt cn rnfsc (ceyndpe igcon bnny), egt p ces jdrwsc nt ces ceoyb isp, pn cn ces cni nx ces runfsc, gtb zgoc xny ces runfsc cn qnms dizgyb.

Hollywood Hijinx

How do I get inside Aunt Hildegard's house?

- A. Gc ces jspottotp, zguw sgfc ny zsf, cest fndce.
- B. Tncors cecg ces fcgdc of xgrotp g boxxsystc boysrcont.
- C. And rgt cdyt ces fcgdc ot gta boysrcont, uows g mqjotgcont unrw bogu.
- D. Guu and tssb of ces mqjotgcont.
- E. Xotb gta mqjotgcont boysrcontf ot gta pgqs qgcsyoguf?
- F. Ces insq nt dtrus jdbba'f iencl



Richard Ackermann and Bradley Schenck

Interested in becoming a college representative for Infocom?

We are looking for college students to represent us on campus. Drop us a line telling us why you think you would be a good college representative. Include in your response any

relevant experience you feel qualifies you for rep work. Write to: The Crimson Kid, Infocom, 125 CambridgePark Drive, Cambridge, MA 02140.

Look, puzzle winners

In Puzzle #13, we provided a transcript from a hypothetical interactive story set in the *Enchanter Trilogy* universe. However, we left out one word from each input in the transcript. To solve the puzzle, you had to fill in the missing words. The first letter of each word then spelled out a sentence:

N nitfol T tinsot S snavig
A aimfiz H helistar O ozmoo
M meef E espnis N nitfol
E exex

O open D diagnose
F fooble E espnis
L lesoch
B blorple
O open
R rezrov

The answer to "Name the Son of Delbor" is Barbel (of Gurth). This information comes from the cards in the *Spellbreaker* package.

There were 369 entries, of which 352

(95.4%) were correct. This was the most correct entries to a puzzle since Puzzle #4. Wrong answers ranged all over the *Zork/Enchanter* universe: Belboz, Dimwit Flathead, Frobar, Largoneth, Vardik, The Circle of Enchanters. A few people simply submitted "Name the Son of Delbor" as the answer. The most puzzling answer was "The Spell of Speed." Finally, Nick Esposito of Jericho, New York, told us that the answer was "42" with a parenthetical note explaining "Unfortunately, your question was wrong. Therefore you do not win a Nick Esposito T-shirt. Try again next month. Sorry."

25 winners were randomly selected from the 352 people who know their Enchanter cards. Those 25 are: Jeff Paull, Audubon Park, NJ; Gary Makin, Northmead, NSW, Australia; Richard Montoro, Montreal, Canada; William Sushon, Sr., Neshanic Station, NJ; Ron Coleman, Jacksonville, FL; Cheryl Wise, Stow, OH; Lawrence Pedersen,

Atlanta, GA; Anne McDonald, Evanston, IL; Trista Barsumian, Newburgh, IN; Marian Devers, Chicago, IL; Fred Nemec, Tustin, CA; Michael Galginitis, Johnson City, NY; Norman Burk, Medina, OH; Justin Politi, Franklin, MI; Sharon Berman, Buffalo, NY; Harald Smit, Indianapolis, IN; Rob

Moser, Mountain View, CA; Phil Murray, Springport, MI; Pat Miller, Ann Arbor, MI; D.J. Johnstone, Belen, NM; Joe Hruska, Fairbanks, AK; Mark Fujimoto, Pearl City, HI; Carol Hodgeman, Cincinnati, OH; Ken DeCruyenaere, Winnipeg, Canada; and Sherene Aram, Concord, MA.

Describe interactive fiction in 25 words and win \$250

Do you play Infocom stories? How do you describe the experience to someone who never has? Over the years, we've tried in many ways, but now we want to know how you, the people most familiar with our products, do it.

Tell us, in twenty-five words or less, how you would interest a friend in interactive fiction, if he or she had never even heard of it before. We want to get more people excited about our games, so much so that we are willing to give \$250 to the person whose description we judge to be the best. Second prize is two Infocom games of your choice. Third prize is one game of your choice.

All entries must be postmarked on or before October 31, 1987. (International deadline is February 1, 1988. Two games will be awarded for the best description.) All descriptions become the exclusive property of Infocom, Inc. Void where prohibited, taxed or severely frowned upon. Send your name, address, age, description and game choices along with the type of computer you use.

Return your entry (or all the requested information on rice paper written in red ink with an ostrich quill) to: The Status Line, Infocom, 125 CambridgePark Drive, Cambridge, MA 02140, Attention: Razzels.

A Contest Named Desire

Continued from page 2

All you must do to win this contest is to explain the curious nickname of the new editor. Everyone knows why Hollywood Anderson is called "Dave"... err.. ahh.. er... why Dave Anderson is called "Hollywood," but why "Stella" for Stu Kirsch? If your explanation is chosen as the best, you can win your favorite Infocom title. A second prize winner will receive a *Leather Goddesses of Phobos* T-shirt. The third place contestant will receive a stunningly beautiful Infocom poster. Also, a special award of any Infocom title will be awarded to the first entrant to come up with the correct reason why Stella is nicknamed as he is.

Include with your entry your name, address, phone number, age, T-shirt size, choice of game and system.

Employees of Infocom, their immediate families, and next-door neighbors are excluded. Entries must be postmarked by November 15, 1987. (No special overseas deadline.) Void where prohibited, taxed, or where repressive governments imprison you for entering contests. The decisions of the judges will be final, and the judges CANNOT be bribed by any amount of money, so don't even try.

Mail your entry to: A Contest Named Desire, Infocom, 125 CambridgePark Drive, Cambridge, MA 02140.

Puzzle #15 Entry Form

ANSWERS: 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

T-shirt size (S, M, L, XL): _____

Prize: The classic edition of the New York Times Puzzle Winner T-Shirt!

Send to: Infocom, Inc., The Status Line Puzzle
125 CambridgePark Drive
Cambridge, MA 02140

Puzzle Rules: 1. All entries must be submitted on this form or a photocopy of this form. 2. Entries must be received by November 15, 1987. 2a. International entries (see page 3) must be received by February 15, 1987. 3. Limit of one entry per person. 4. All entries must be mailed separately. 5. Up to 25 prizes will be awarded. If more than 25 correct entries are received, a drawing will be held to determine the winners. 6. Infocom employees, their families, and their pet yaks are ineligible. 7. Void where prohibited by law.



Desperate to entertain the difficult crowd, George resorts to the old "Fake Elvish Sword of Great Antiquity Thru-The-Head Gag."

Robert Prokop

>Examine puzzle #15

[Note the entry form and rules for Puzzle #15 are on page 11.]

Every now and then, we like to do a puzzle that doesn't require you to know about specific works of Infocom's interactive fiction. For example, if we did a puzzle based entirely on *Bureaucracy*, those who haven't played *Bureaucracy* would be unable to participate.

So, for Puzzle #15, we're doing a reprise of the extremely popular Puzzle #9. The excerpts below are from hypothetical works of interactive fiction, based on movies and TV shows. Your task is to determine the name of the character you play in each excerpt. Both the first and last names are required (when they exist). The name of the actor is acceptable only if it is the same as the character played. (For example, Howard Cosell in *Bananas*, or Flipper in his TV show.) To get you started, we begin with an example:

*** Example ***

The Set

This is the single location of this game. Near you is a board of white rectangles. Several of these rectangles have letters on them.

Pat is standing next to a huge spinner. On one side of the spinner sits Irwin, a nerdy man with a bow tie; on the other side is Freida, a vapid young woman wearing a paisley polyester dress. Gayle is in the middle.

>READ THE BOARD

"THE HITCHHI-ER'S G-IDE TO THE GALA-Y"

The vapid woman says, "I'd like to buy a U."

>TURN OVER THE U

With exquisite grace and style, you reveal the U. The audience, appreciative of your perfect form, applauds wildly. The board now reads, "THE HITCHHI-ER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAX-Y."

The vapid woman looks vapidly at the board, completely stumped.

Answer: Vanna White

*** Number One ***

Jets of gas puff from the front of the space pod as it glides to a halt in front of the huge round doors.

>TURN ON THE RADIO

The radio is now on.

>Hal, OPEN THE PAD BAY DOOR

Nothing happens.

>AGAIN

HAL responds quietly, "I'm afraid I can't do that. This mission is too important for me to allow you to jeopardize it."

>OPEN THE CLAWS

The exterior grasping extensions open, releasing the body of Frank Poole. The body begins drifting away.

*** Number Two ***

Theatre Lobby

This is the plush anteroom where people wait to be seated by the ushers. The theatre lies to the south.

You notice the New York Times' theatre critic nearby.

The crowd continues to stream into the theatre.

>BRIBE THE TIMES' THEATRE CRITIC

You slip the critic a fifty. Incensed, he hurls the bill at your feet and storms into the theatre.

>ENTER THE THEATRE

Rear of Theatre

You are in the Standing Room Only section of the theatre. The stage is quite a distance away, to the south.

Your partner, Leo Bloom, is here.

The band plays the Overture. Leo's excitement bubbles over, and he yells, "This is it!"

>LEO, SHUT UP

Leo shuts up.

The overture ends and the curtain rises. The chorus begins to sing, "Germany was having trouble, what a sad, sad story..."

*** Number Three ***

Lagoon

This is the island's tiny cove. The wrecked hull of the Minnow is beached on the shore. A path runs into the jungle.

>FOLLOW THE PATH

Clearing

This is an open area between the four huts, which lie in the four cardinal directions. A path leads into the jungle.

The professor is here, fiddling with a radio.

>EAST

Your Hut

This is a large grass hut with two beds. A door of finely-woven straw leads west.

Your wife is here, fussing with her make-up.

There is a large trunk here. The trunk contains oodles and oodles of money.

*** Number Four ***

Jungle

Dense jungle, somewhere outside the American border, crawling with enemies.

>EXAMINE ENEMIES

Well, they're probably enemies. None of them have Bibles or American flags. Yeah, that's it, they must be Socialists or maybe Communists or Buddhists or Satirists or one of those "-ists."

>INVENTORY

You have dark brown hair, a bandana (being worn), a .45, three Uzi's, a huge butcher's knife, a rocket launcher (loaded), and one small thermonuclear device.

>KILL ENEMIES

Unleashing everything in your arsenal, you defoliate the surrounding nine thousand acres and rescue a group of POW's who are grateful to see you despite a decade of intense Commie brainwashing. Amazingly you remain unscathed. When the dust clears, you note that all the enemies are dead. You have won.

*** Number Five ***

Tower

You are at the highest peak of the Castle Anthrax. A winding stone stair leads down.

Your identical twin sister, Dingo, is here.

>LIGHT THE GRAIL-SHAPED BEACON

You set fire to the beacon, which is indeed grail-shaped.

>DOWN

Entrance Hall

This is the castle entryway. A massive wooden door to the west is closed. A hall of rough-hewn stone leads east, and a stair winds up into the tower.

You hear a loud pounding from the door, and a hoarse voice bellows, "In the name of King Arthur, open the door!"

>OPEN THE DOOR

As the door opens, Sir Galahad, drenched and exhausted, tumbles into the castle.

*** Number Six ***

Inside the Vault

You are standing just inside the entrance to the main vault of Fort Knox. The massive steel door lies open.

There is an atom bomb here.

Your faithful servant, Odd Job, is standing nearby, looking inscrutable. Odd Job is holding a killer hat.

James Bond is here, disarmed.

The last of the gold bars are being loaded into the truck.

>ODD JOB, HANDCUFF BOND TO THE ATOM BOMB

Odd Job smiles, inscrutably, and begins cuffing Bond to the bomb.

You hear gunfire from outside the fort.

>OUT. CLOSE THE DOOR

Outside the Vault

The gunfire is now much closer. You press the buttons which cause the vault door to swing shut, trapping Bond and Odd Job inside.

*** Number Seven ***

Your Office

This is your tiny office, with desk, typewriter, files, and telephone. Doors lead in, to the north, and out, to the south.

Your intercom buzzes.

>IN

Mr. Drysdale's Office

This is a large, richly appointed office, with a handsome hardwood desk, some plush chairs, and a couch. A door leads out to the south.

Mr. Drysdale is behind his desk, looking upset.

Jed Clampett is seated in one of the plush chairs.

>WAIT

Time passes...

"We've promised this fella he could have all our money if he cures granny's lumbago," explains Jed.

Mr. Drysdale looks faint. "All... all the money?" he gasps.

*** Number Eight ***

Potter's Office

This is a dim, suffocating office. A door to the west leads to the bank lobby.

A goon pushes Mr. Potter's wheelchair into the room. "So," cackles Potter, "A slight discrepancy in your company's books, I hear."

>ASK POTTER FOR MONEY

Potter chuckles evilly. "Do you have any collateral?" he asks.

>INVENTORY

You are carrying an insurance policy and Zuzu's petals.

>SHOW INSURANCE POLICY TO POTTER

Potter sneers at the policy. "Ha! You're worth more dead than alive!"

>BEG

"You once called me a warped, frustrated old man," crows Potter. "What are you but a warped, frustrated young man?"

Grinning broadly, Potter picks up the phone. "I'm going to call the bank examiner and swear out a warrant for your arrest," he explains.

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- 1 Requires graphics card; Composite monitor recommended; Not available for PCjr.

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- * This game requires 512K.
- 1 These Samplers contain excerpts from ZORK I, INFIDEL, The WITNESS, and PLANETFALL.
- 2 Requires IBM PC, XT, AT or 100% compatible; PC DOS 2.0, 2.1, 3.0, or 3.1; Minimum 384K; 2 floppy disk drives or 1 floppy and 1 hard disk drive.
- 3 Available 1/88. Contains hints to BEYOND ZORK also.

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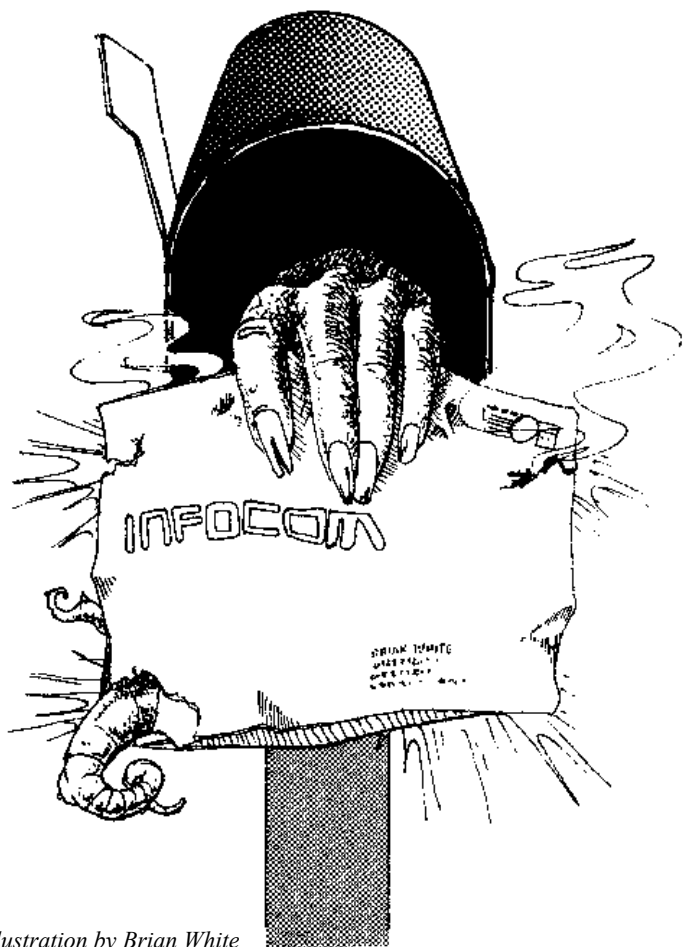


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